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THE BLACK STRING. — Mr. Edward W. Gilbert of New York city has prepared at my request the following notes on the love-charm known as the "Black String," and the extraordinary superstitions associated with it. He obtained the information partly from the owner, "Andy M.," and partly from conversations with the patriarchs of the now extinct "Cork Row," on Cherry Street, New York, a neighborhood where Gaelic was spoken in every-day life.

"The Black String is a most powerful love-charm. It is composed of a strip of the skin from the body of a man who has committed suicide for love ; it must be 'peeled from the head to the heel and back without crack or split,' and prepared for use by peculiar ceremonies which my informants steadfastly refused to disclose.

"Persons owning the Black String have the power of securing the love of any one so long as they have the string in their possession. In order to have the charm work, it must be obtained by theft : if it is given to you, bought, or found, it will till act as a charm, but will bring the owner all kinds of ill luck. If the owner loses it he forfeits at the same moment the power of compelling love from others. Any one who dies with the string in his possession goes direct to perdition, and no power on earth or in heaven can save him. The only way to escape this fate is to have the thing stolen from you ; if it is bought, given, or lost, while the owner loses the privileges conferred by the charm, he does not escape the penalty conditional on ownership. As far as I understand it, unless the charm is stolen, the property remains with the right owner, and the ill luck pursuing the man who gets it by purchase, gift, or otherwise is due to the fact that 'it wants to get back to its master.' It cannot be destroyed, for it is believed that if any one owning was to destroy it, he would die at the same time.

"The charm which I saw and handled," says Mr. Gilbert, "was covered with red silk, much worn and stained ; it was in the form of a necklace, that is, the ends joined, and was large enough to pass over a man's head, when doubled. It was owned by a young man of Irish-American descent ; his family were well-to-do, middle-class people, and he had received a public school education, and, I think, had attended some college. He was well read, and above the average intelligence. His faith in this thing was strong, and seemed to be borne out by facts. Whether through the charm or not, he certainly had an extraordinary and dangerous power of fascination for most women. He told me that he got it from a woman whom he met at Saratoga in 1879, who showed it to him and told him of its properties, and from whom he stole it. She had got it from a racing man. Before the death of Andy M. he was greatly troubled by his possession of the thing, believing as he did that he was lost forever if he died owning it, and would have been glad if any of his friends would have secured it ; but owing to the unpleasant penalty attached to it none of the men he knew would make any effort to get it. One of his friends told a woman of his acquaintance about it, and she got him to take her to see the owner, and stole it from him ; I am told that it was stolen from her by a well-known actress who had heard of it, and who has it now.

"The owner of this love-charm believed in it implicitly ; at the same time he wore also a scapular, an emblem of Christian faith. He kept the latter on his person continually, and only removed it in his last illness, which occurred in 1884."

H. Carrington Bolton.

LOCAL MEETINGS AND OTHER NOTICES.

ANNUAL MEETING. — Members of the American Folk-Lore Society are reminded that the Annual Meeting for 1895 will be held at Philadelphia, at the end of December. Particulars of the intended meeting, together with a programme, will hereafter be furnished.

BALTIMORE. — Since the birth of the Baltimore Folk-Lore Society on February 23, 1895, there have been seven meetings, at all of which great interest has been manifested in the subject of folk-lore, its study and preservation. A president, vice-president, secretary, and a council of eight have been elected.

Though still in its infancy, moving slowly but carefully and surely, that the most satisfactory work may in the end be accomplished, the Society has already been fortunate in securing valuable and interesting papers. Twice have both Dr. Washington Matthews and Dr. J. H. McCormick, of Washington, read papers ; the one on Navajo myths, the other on negro tales and superstitions. Among other papers read at the different meetings were the following : One by Miss Mary W. Minor, giving the origin of Jack O' My Lantern, as told by the negroes in her father's kitchen ; one by Mrs. Albert Soussa, giving a negro sermon on the text, "Hist de window, Noah, an' let de dove come in," in the course of which Eve was described as having "a good black skin." A conjure bag and its contents were described by Miss Smith. Mr. John McLaren McBryde read a paper, in which he gave, having taken it down phonetically, a negro debate on "De Pen an' de Swode ;" also, in the same way, a play he had witnessed in eastern Virginia among the negroes, representing the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon. This showed a strong resemblance to the old miracle-plays.

Another paper of interest was read by Dr. Milton S. Vail, of Tōkyō, and dealt with those Japanese superstitions particularly connected with the fox. In connection with it, a folk-tale of the fox was given. Mrs. Thomas Hill read a paper, giving an account of some religious rites practiced by the Iroquois Indians at Rochester in 1813, as described by an eye-witness.

The Society is indebted to Mrs. John D. Early, 711 Park Avenue, and to Miss Etta Leigh, 18 East Franklin Street, for their courtesy in tendering the use of their parlors for its meetings.

Annie Weston Whitney, Secretary.